



ASSOCIATION FOR PERFORMANCE-BASED ACCREDITATION

INTRODUCTION

When Arizona passed its charter school legislation in 1994, no one would have predicted that this state would be leading a ground-swell movement for school choice. Today, five years and 400+ charters later, Arizona stands at the forefront of education reform. The legislation passed in Arizona remains the most progressive, dynamic and market-based of all charter legislation in the country; and this is revolutionary in the field of education. As in all revolutions, credibility is essential. Scrutiny and criticism are inevitable. In this market-based environment, charters welcomed the scrutiny and voluntarily stepped up to the plate.

Accreditation is the most commonly used method of ensuring that school academics, health and safety issues and student performance measures are aligned with existing standards. Accreditation also provides a framework for schools to undergo a continuous process of self-study and school improvement.

During 1995-1997 the majority of Arizona charter schools began the accreditation process through North Central Association. However, many of these schools found that the traditional measures involved in this accreditation cycle were too limiting, too archaic and not sufficiently rigorous to ensure student achievement and school improvement. This method of accreditation did not meet the needs of those schools on the vanguard of education reform.

ORIGINS

This was the scenario in January of 1997. The general membership of the Arizona Charter Schools Association (ACSA) directed its Executive Committee to investigate, research and propose an alternative accreditation model. This model must be both rigorous enough to ensure credibility and general enough to meet the needs of hundreds of different charter schools each with a different mission and vision.

What evolved is the Association for Performance-Based Accreditation (APBA). APBA has been presented back to the general membership of ASCA at the Annual Conference in Phoenix in January of 1999. APBA has been presented at the Second National Charter School Conference hosted by the US Department of Education in Denver, CO in March of 1999. APBA has received rave reviews and considerable support from the Governor of Arizona, The Honorable, Jane Dee Hull, Arizona Superintendent of Education, Lisa Graham-Keegan, members of the

Arizona Legislature, and many members of ASCA who are waiting to climb on board and initiate the accreditation process.

Unlike traditional district schools, a charter school must go through a lengthy process prior to a charter being issued. An applicant must provide a considerable amount of research and information as part of the charter application. Prior to submitting a charter application for review, the applicant(s) must do the following (items in *Italics* duplicate Steps 1, 2, and 3 of the traditional accreditation cycle):

- *Engage the relevant stakeholders in the design and creation of the vision, mission, goals and objective of the potential charter*
- *Research the demographics of the community targeted by the potential charter*
- *Do a market analysis in order to gauge the success factor of the potential charter*
- Provide a five year itemized budget (using USFR-SC or GAAP).
- Provide a school calendar with the required number of instructional days and demonstration of staff development/training times
- Provide a standards based scope and sequence of the curriculum to be used and samples of curriculum products
- Describe the instructional method to be implemented and the rationale given the student population targeted
- *Describe and provide a mechanism for assessing student performance that is tailored to the instructional method used, the population of students targeted and the vision and mission of the potential charter*
- Provide a mechanism for assessing and ensuring teacher competency if non-certified teachers are to be employed.
- Provide a description of how services to students with disabilities will be provided, by whom and provide special education policies and procedures
- Locate a site, provide site and architect drawings that have city zoning approval and approval from the State Fire Marshall
- Provide resumes, background checks, fingerprints and any relevant certifications of all applicants and board members
- Sign assurances that the charter, the corporation that will hold the charter and the individuals involved will maintain compliance with open meeting laws.

Once these areas have been addressed contractually, the charter application goes through a rigorous review prior to submission to the sponsoring board. **At this point the charter applicant has been required by statute to follow and clearly exceed the initial three to four steps in the traditional 3-5 year accreditation cycle.**

ORGANIZATION

We invite you to join other schools in the accreditation process. The following is a summary of APBA, its Mission, and the Method for initiating the Accreditation Cycle, the Requirements for Membership and the Types of Membership.

ORGANIZATION

The APBA is a non-profit association of member schools dedicated to improving academic excellence through the measurement of student achievement. The APBA also supports the market-based environment, which allows educational choice for all students. The Association will be governed by the member schools. The APBA will work closely with all of the sponsoring entities on the common goals of school performance, school credibility, parental choice and the dissemination of relevant information.

MISSION

Market-based systems work most effectively when consumers and other stakeholders have ready access to meaningful, accurate and timely information. The APBA promotes and supports the diversity of vision held by its members and encourages each member to make its vision an educational reality.

The mission of the Association for Performance-Based Accreditation (APBA) is to assist schools through the process of self- and peer-evaluation and accreditation. APBA will also provide member schools a mechanism for providing accreditation information to parents, students, schools, governing boards, sponsoring entities and other interested parties to assist them in evaluating schools.

METHOD OF ACCREDITATION

Accreditation is the most commonly used method of ensuring that school academics, health and safety issues and student performance measures are aligned with existing standards. Accreditation also provides a framework for schools to undergo a continuous process of self-study and school improvement. The school seeking accreditation will request an application packet from APBA. The instructions for completing the application are included in the packet. At a minimum the school's goals must refer to the following major components of the accreditation process:

- Goals - The school will establish goals. The goals will be specific enough and general enough to allow the reader to obtain a clear understanding of the school. The goals must be measurable and directly related to student outcomes. At a minimum the school's goals must address:
 1. The "comparison results" score increase from the previous year on state mandated standardized tests.
 2. Academic gains as measured by assessments other than the state mandated assessment.
 3. Other goals that describe the school's philosophy and vision.
- Annual Report - Each applicant school will submit an annual Statement of Assurances form with a notarized signature.

- Annual Parent Satisfaction Survey - An annual parent satisfaction survey will allow parents to relate their overall satisfaction with their child's school as well as the school's performance on each of its goals.

MEMBERSHIP REQUIREMENTS

The applicant school is required to make a timely submission of the application packet. There is a non-refundable processing/application fee.

Applicant schools, both members and non-members of the Arizona Charter Schools Association, will be charged a fee per student for the accreditation cycle.

MEMBERSHIP STATUS

Candidacy Status - applicant is in the initial stage of the application process. Application has been submitted, goals have been defined and school is in process of collecting corroborating data.

Member Status - applicant school has successfully completed its first annual report and parent satisfaction survey. All member schools that do not achieve the requirements for "Member in Good Standing" or are not under disciplinary action as "Member on Probation" will simply remain "Member Schools".

Member in Good Standing Status - member school demonstrates academic excellence, high parent satisfaction, compliance with all legal requirements, and strong financial management will be moved to the level of "Member in Good Standing".

Member on Probation Status - member school that demonstrates poor academic performance, low parent satisfaction, lack of compliance with legal requirements or poor financial management will be placed on probation. Such schools may lose their membership.

For additional information please contact:

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